



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR
Robert G. Ortt

Senate Republicans Unveil Victims' Justice Agenda

ROBERT G. ORTT July 15, 2021

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ALBANY, NY – Senate Republican Leader Rob Ortt and members of the Senate Republican Conference today unveiled the “Victims’ Justice Agenda,” a package of bills designed to protect crime victims and reverse the troubling rise in violent crime rates throughout New York.

“In 2019, One-Party Rule in Albany started a troubling trend by putting their thumbs on the scales of justice and passing the first of their many criminal justice “reforms.” Two years later, we’ve seen it over and over again: violent criminals given nothing but comfort, and their victims given nothing but pain. If this wave of violence truly is an emergency, as the Governor recently announced, we must get back to the basics of public safety. That begins

by reversing out-of-whack priorities that favor criminals over law-abiding New Yorkers. I am proud to stand with my colleagues in support of our continued initiatives to restore common sense and public safety in New York,” said Senate Republican Leader Ortt.

The rise of violent crimes in major cities throughout New York this year follows the implementation of Democrats’ dangerous bail and discovery reforms in 2019, the disbanding of the NYPD’s “anti-crime” unit, a billion-dollar cut to New York City police funding, and an overall pro-criminal, anti-police climate fostered under all-Democrat rule.

Senate Republicans’ Victims’ Justice Agenda follows the lawmakers’ push to “Protect Those Who Protect Us” [in May](#) and a Parole Reform package of bills unveiled [last month](#). Safeguarding victims is another critical part of an ongoing criminal justice agenda geared towards restoring common sense and public safety in New York.

Keynotes of the Victims’ Justice Agenda include:

[S.3842](#) (Serino) - Adds certain offenses committed by a family member to the list of crimes qualifying for bail. Protects victims of domestic violence by allowing judges more discretion in securing orders in certain cases related to domestic violence.

[S.6290](#) (Lanza) – Makes hate crimes eligible for bail. [Earlier this year](#), an anti-Semitic synagogue attacker in the Bronx was released without bail after a judge overturned another court order that defied current bail reform laws.

[S.6153](#) (Boyle) - Ensures repeat offenders qualify for bail and pre-trial detention when the principal has been convicted of one or more misdemeanor or felony offenses. [Earlier this year](#), an Oswego man was arrested 18 times over the span of four days on charges ranging from stealing, harassing, resisting arrest, and trespassing. None of the repeat crimes he was charged under were bail eligible, and he was only held with bail after his 18th arrest for burglary and larceny.

[S.4563](#) (Griffo) – Criminalizes anti-Semitism under state human rights law – [in April](#), it was revealed by the Anti-Defamation League that New York leads the nation in anti-Semitic attacks. [Recent demonstrations](#) in New York City have also descended into multiple hateful attacks against members of the Jewish community in the wake of violent terrorist attacks against Israel and anti-Israel rhetoric by [some New York state legislators](#).

The legislative package also includes:

[S.171](#) (Tedisco) – Authorizes imposition of life imprisonment without parole sentence for persistent violent felony offenders. Persistent felons have three or more felony convictions.

[S.1521](#) (Tedisco) – Relates to setting bail for defendants who pose a threat to public safety. This bill would provide judges with discretion when setting bail for dangerous defendants.

[S.1523A](#) (Tedisco) – Repeals bail and discovery reform.

[S.2565](#) (Jordan) – Relates to making a murder as the result of a drive-by shooting murder in the first degree. In the wake of the tragic murder of an 11-year-old child from Troy [in September 2020](#), Senator Jordan introduced this bill to strengthen penalties for those who terrorize innocent communities through drive-by shootings.

[S.2277](#) (Helming) – Relates to requiring health care facilities to report incidents of a sexual offense to the departments of both health and education.

[S.6766](#) (Serino) – Relates to protecting witnesses in criminal prosecutions from intimidation and threats.

[S.6923](#) (Lanza) – Strengthens penalties for crimes committed on MTA property, similar to the hate crime statute. Random attacks and declining quality of life on the New York City subway system have [recently deterred](#) many from riding the subway.

“As a former prosecutor and chair of the Senate Codes Committee, I repeatedly sounded the alarm on what would happen if Albany’s many criminal justice “reforms” were signed into law. A revolving door has been created for those who terrorize our communities. Violent crime has risen to levels not seen in many years. Our first responsibility as public servants is to protect public safety. We can restore common sense now by enacting this “Victims’ Justice Agenda,” said Deputy Republican Leader Andrew Lanza.

“Time and time again the Democrats in Albany refused to listen to the concerns of those who work in the criminal justice system on the disastrous bail and discovery reforms. It's no surprise that crime is out of control across the state. As a proud cosponsor of this legislation, this package prioritizes protecting crime victims, ensures that violent criminals stay off the street and supports our community heroes,” said Senator Fred Akshar.

“The Governor and his allies can deny it or ignore it all they want, but those who are on the front lines of our criminal justice system have repeatedly cited the so-called criminal justice ‘reforms’ and other reckless pro-criminal policies as the culprits of our current crime wave. Tragically, the casualties at the other end of these misguided policies are crime victims and their families, who have paid a terrible price for Democrats’ politically-driven agenda. The package being advanced by our conference is a blueprint for refocusing the state’s priorities on the rights of victims and public safety,” said Senator George Borrello.

“As a former State Trooper and Sheriff of Erie County, I understand the many challenges facing our law enforcement community. While some changes to our criminal justice system were warranted, we must ensure that safeguards are in place to protect our communities and residents. These so-called reforms favor offenders over law-abiding citizens and have led to a sense of lawlessness, where those perpetrating violent crimes have no fear of being held accountable for their actions. It is time to restore common-sense criminal justice policies,” said Senator Patrick Gallivan.

“Failed policies from Albany heralded as ‘reform’ but without important input from all stakeholders have resulted in rising crime rates in New York City and across the state, less protections for crime victims and a revolving door for criminals who are often back on the street shortly after being arrested. This package of legislation, including a bill that I have introduced, includes practical and common-sense ideas, initiatives and approaches that will offer additional protections to crime victims, institute needed changes to the state’s bail and discovery laws and make our communities safer,” said Senator Joseph Griffo.

“As elected officials, we must do everything we can to protect and support crime victims and their families. This is something we should all be united on. Everyone deserves to live in a safe neighborhood and a safe community. I am proud to fight for the rights of crime victims and to stand with my colleagues in advocating for these measures,” said Senator Pam Helming.

“Cuomo and the Albany Democrats’ disingenuous, dangerous, and disastrous policies are resulting in more violent criminals being released and our police being defunded and under siege. We need to defend the police, stand with crime victims, and reverse the Democrats’ reckless laws like bail ‘reform’ that threaten the public safety of every New Yorker. Instead of targeting law-abiding gun owners, Cuomo should take a long, hard look in the mirror to see the real reason for the alarming increase in violent crime and near daily shootings happening

across our state. It's because of his and his Albany Democrat enablers' misguided criminal-coddling policies that violent thugs are being released and law-abiding New Yorkers are being terrorized. My bill that's part of our Crime Victims legislative package would strengthen penalties for those who terrorize innocent communities through drive-by shootings in light of the terrible tragedy that happened in Troy during 2020 when an innocent 11-year-old child was shot and killed. Our state deserves better than soft on crime policies and crime victims deserve justice," said Senator Daphne Jordan.

"To the extent we have a public health crisis in this state tied to violent crime, Andrew Cuomo is the cause and not the solution. Our Crime Victims Package puts the focus of our criminal justice system back where it belongs – protecting our families and supporting law enforcement. The soft on crime approach favored by the Governor and his allies in the Legislature has been an abject failure and it's long past time we reversed course," said Senator Mike Martucci.

"As our state continues to recover from the ongoing crisis, it is imperative that we focus on restoring common-sense to public protection. With crime rates continuing to increase, the "Victims' Justice Agenda" will protect our families and our communities. That is essential to helping our state build back stronger than ever and now is the time to enact policies that put the rights of our law-abiding residents first," said Senator Mario R. Mattera.

"Protecting the public is one of the most important responsibilities of government, and when a crime has been committed, the victim, not the criminal, should be our first concern. Policies enacted in Albany over the last few years have instead shielded criminals, including repeat offenders, leaving law-abiding citizens defenseless. Crime is on the rise for one simple reason – more criminals are on the streets. It is time to take meaningful action and put public safety first," said Senator Peter Oberacker.

"Enough is enough and we need to stand up, speak out, and fight against the pro-criminal, anti-police mentality and policies that keep going too far in New York State. Governor Cuomo and the Democrat supermajorities in control of the State Legislature show no signs of letting up in their push for a so-called progressive agenda that only stands to emolden criminals and keep making this state and our communities less safe. We need to enact legislation that puts crime victims and safe communities first," said Senator Tom O'Mara.

“Over the course of two short years, Democrat lawmakers have enacted a series of bad bills that have put the interests of criminals before those of law enforcement and crime victims to disastrous effect. Now, more than ever, we must fight back against these radical policies and promote stronger public protection laws to make New York a safer place to call home,” said Senator Anthony Palumbo.

“As a State Senator, assuring our communities are safe for everyone is of the utmost importance to me. It is equally as important that those who are committing these violent acts are held accountable. Unfortunately, over the past few years, we have seen criminals being prioritized over crime victims and public safety. I join my colleagues in calling for measures that will reduce the violence being seen in our communities and prioritize our communities and their safety,” said Senator Ed Rath.

“There is nothing more critical than the safety of our state and its families. Unfortunately though, in the wake of the Democrats’ push for policies that favor criminals, our communities are becoming less safe. It is beyond time to reverse these failed reforms and move forward with common-sense policies that puts law-abiding New Yorkers first. I am proud to stand with my colleagues to advocate for these measures, which will help reestablish public safety in our state,” said Senator Patty Ritchie.

“We have been fighting for the rights of victims and law-abiding citizens for years, but never has that fight been more important as we work to rebuild in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Public safety has to be our top priority and Albany’s Supermajority must open its eyes and see that its policy of putting criminals first is really hurting our communities. Even on my ‘Small Business Bounce Back Tour,’ I am hearing from employers who are dealing first-hand with the effects of misguided policies like ‘bail reform.’ Their voices must be heard and we must make common-sense changes to restore law and order to bring residents back and to ensure the health and safety of all New Yorkers,” said Senator Sue Serino.

“One of the small North Country communities I represent is reeling from the recent shocking murder of a woman by someone who had just hours before been arrested for a felony drug charge. He also had a drug arrest in late May and had served a prison sentence a few years ago. Instead of being held, the so-called bail reform law assured he walked. A family is now mourning the loss of a mom and grandmother whose life was cut far too short and we must wonder whether this tragedy was preventable,” said Senator Dan Stec.

“The Merriam Webster dictionary’s definition of the word ‘reform’ is to ‘put or change into an improved form or condition.’ The opposite of reform is the word ‘deform’ defined as ‘to spoil the form of.’ Two years ago, the progressives in the legislative Majorities and the Governor said that they would reform New York’s criminal justice system. However, the violence in our streets and soaring crime statistics so far illustrates the best of intentions has led to the very worst of unintended consequences. Clearly, removing discretion from judges to hold those they deem a danger to themselves and others has been a big mistake that’s made New Yorkers less safe and created a revolving door of danger and disaster where many are given ‘get out of jail free cards!’ We need to reform the deform of our criminal justice system by passing a reasonable compromise like my bi-partisan legislation (S.1521/A.1705) to bring discretion back to our judiciary, reduce crime and restore common-sense,” said Senator Jim Tedisco.

“One party control in Albany has advanced policies that protect criminals and attack law enforcement, which is bad for our State and our communities. Our Conference’s Victims Justice Agenda package of bills focuses on public safety, supporting law enforcement, and ensuring victims’ voices are heard. I am proud to stand with my Senate Republican colleagues in advancing this common-sense package of bills,” said Senator Alexis Weik.

Earlier this month, the Governor declared a “disaster emergency on gun violence,” a move that was met with mixed reaction due to his recent record on criminal justice “reforms.” Though it was a long-overdue acknowledgment of rising violence in areas throughout the state, the declared emergency does nothing to address Democrats’ recent “reforms” or other pro-criminal, anti-cop policies and rhetoric coming from Albany.

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